

An E-government Strategy for America's Workforce Network

The Internet will be a transforming event in our lifetimes. If anything, I believe the hype will turn out to be understated. It is causing a profound shift in the way people communicate, the ways companies conduct business, and the very businesses those companies engage in.

*Harvey Golub, Chairman & CEO
American Express*

Revised May 30, 2001

An E-government Strategy for America's Workforce Network

A Discussion Draft

(Note to reader: This copy of the e-government strategy is a "revised draft" and it reflects the results of the "consultation strategy" that insured comprehensive involvement of all the AWN partners in the design and adoption of an e-government strategy. This paper contains recommendations, concerns and issues gathered during a series of consultation meetings with ETA national and regional staff and state and local workforce development professionals and IT professionals. These regional meetings were held in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas and Providence, RI between March 8 and May 2, 2001.. Further comments and suggestions were gathered from numerous e-mails, messages on the Collaborative Work Space and telephone conversations.)

The Policy Council for the Employment Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) convened a workgroup to research and to develop an initial strategy for transforming the partners of America's Workforce Network (AWN), including ETA, into an e-government enabled system. This document offers such a strategy for collaborative discussion among the partners in AWN along with a rationale for its adoption. This document was designed to engage the system's stakeholders in a dialogue with the goal of reaching a common strategy for e-government. These dialogues have been conducted and the original draft has been modified to represent the input of the AWN partners.

What is America's Workforce Network?

The scale and requirements of this initiative, and of these strategies, makes it imperative that all America's Workforce Network (AWN) partners work collectively and collaboratively to design and implement plans. The Network is a nationwide system of workforce development organizations receiving federal funds that provide information and services to help employers find qualified workers and to help people manage their careers.¹

What is e-government?

E-government is the transformation of public sector internal and external relationships

¹America's Workforce Network includes those organizations that receive youth, adult and dislocated workers grants under the Workforce Investment Act; State agencies under the Wagner-Peyser Act, State unemployment insurance agencies, and welfare-to-work grantees. Also included are organizations that receive grants for Indians and Native Americans, Migrant and Seasonal Farm-workers, and Older Americans programs; organizations receiving grants to assist persons with disabilities; Job Corps Center Operators; Job Corps Recruitment and Screening Contractors; Job Corps National Training Contractors; Youth Opportunity grantees; School-to Work grantees; agencies providing Trade Adjustment Assistance and NAFTA-TAA; grantees operating research, demonstration and evaluation projects; grantees operating National Emergency Grants; Registered Apprenticeship sponsors and programs; and the Workforce Excellence Network.

through Net-enabled operations, information technology, and communications, to optimize government service delivery, constituency participation, and governance. (Gartner Group, October, 2000)

It E-government is a vision of how public sector organizations of the 21st Century will govern, how they will serve citizens, and how they will interact with business partners, their employees, and other government organizations. The "e" in e-government represents a move to fully integrated, secure, paper-free, on-demand accessible electronic government that will:

- \$ improve integrated service delivery;
- provide universal citizen access;
- begin to enhance traditional government structures and processes;
- \$ support new government products and services by relying on the emergence and convergence of new technologies;
- \$ and, improve effectiveness.

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) has fundamentally changed the way business is being conducted in the United States and government is rushing to catch up. Some federal and many state agencies have begun to develop coordinated interagency approaches to electronic service delivery. Such initiatives include improving and integrating electronic access to information and services and improving government information infrastructures. As federal, state, and local agencies explore the feasibility of on-line transaction processing and electronic service delivery applications, they are identifying and addressing the privacy and security concerns of program stakeholders as part of these initiatives².

ETA has made early and significant progress in a move toward e-government. It has made investments in good Web sites, transferred many internal transactions to computer and intra-net supported processes, successfully met the Y2K challenges, and, in conjunction with its partners, developed many customer applications including the creation of America's Career Kit (ACK). ACK is the largest and most significant Web-based career assistance and job-search site on the Internet today. In addition, FirstGov for Workers provides a portal into sources for workers and their families while ETA's Web sites and supported sites such as NASWA's ATM provide portal access for workforce professionals. These initiatives provide us with a sound platform to move forward together because of the experience we have gained in navigating these new waters.

The draft strategies outlined in this document are an explicit call to transform the core business processes of the public workforce investment system--including the services funded and delivered by ETA's partners--to the new e-commerce model. This model assumes a future in which all internal and external parties can access and use the services of America's Workforce Network in an electronically enabled environment. Building the programs that coordinate the internal systems and external resources into a seamless and effective network will provide the America's Workforce Network with both major challenges and opportunities. This vision of government service recognizes the contemporary, rapid development of new social behaviors founded in "e-everything" thinking. Anticipating the dynamic nature of the new e-commerce model, an e-gov

²Refer to <https://www.nasire.org/publications/index.cfm>: for a good list of publications by NASIRE which represents state chief information officers and information resource executives and managers from the 50 states

strategy must be cognizant that there are both an uncertain future world and a need to develop infrastructure to deal with that uncertainty. Therefore, the draft strategies articulated in this document anticipate and invite continual adaptation as changes occur in enabling technologies, 21st Century workforce requirements, or the AWN mission.

Why should the America's Workforce Network adopt an e-government strategy?

The AWN's challenge to commit to an e-government strategy is being driven by its larger and continuing commitment to its public workforce development mission rather than because of the existence and availability of technology. The importance of this statement can not be over-emphasized. The AWN's business processes, its communications systems, and its partnerships must be improved and extended--not because new technology exists that enable these improvements, but because it is in the AWN's interest--to promote excellence, to improve services, to support its commitment to the principles of service excellence, and to carry out its activities in accordance with WIA principles³. ETA's mission as a federal partner in AWN is "to contribute to the more efficient and effective functioning of the U.S. labor market by providing high quality job training, employment, labor market information, and income maintenance services primarily through State and local workforce development systems." AWN's move to e-government will enhance ETA's ability to achieve that mission while at the same time increasing the efficiency by which it does so. It will extend our current investments in bricks and mortar as well as the investments we have already made in program services and information technology.

There are four compelling external arguments that support the adoption by America's Workforce Network of an e-government strategy. The first involves the growing use of, and dependence on, the Internet by millions of Americans, representing a deep and comprehensive social behavioral shift. Second, as many other government agencies have shifted or are shifting to an Internet-based environment, there will be an expectation for the AWN to present similar or parallel opportunities. Third, there is growing evidence that significant operational efficiencies and improved availability of services may be realized. The final argument suggests that the higher connection speeds, diminishing costs, and increasing accessibility of the Internet and its auxiliary tools are bringing the Internet new users, who bring with them new and growing expectations for e-services, and are bridging the digital divide.

- ***Customer reliance on the Internet.*** Perhaps the most pressing reason for the move to an e-government system is to meet the increasing demand of the skyrocketing number of Internet-savvy citizens. Use of the Internet has grown at a pace unlike that experienced in the adoption of any other technology. According to the U.S. Internet Council the Internet's "penetration" of American homes took only 7 years as compared to the computer (13 years), the television (17 years), and the telephone (38 years). In mid-September, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced that more than 50% of all homes were now connected to the Internet. In 1997, 100 million people were using the Internet worldwide;

² The seven WIA principles are: streamlining services, empowering individuals, universal access, increased accountability, new roles for local Boards, State and local flexibility, and improved Youth Programs.

by the end of this year, experts expect that number will exceed 500 million. Because of the incredible breadth of content available through the Internet (nearly 8 billion web pages), more and more Americans are using the Internet as the means to achieve a wide range of personal goals. They are rapidly growing accustomed to using the Internet to obtain information, communicate with others, and conduct business transactions at their own convenience, anytime and anywhere. Consequently, citizens now expect to, and in many cases do, transact their government business over the Internet. They can renew driver's licenses, enter court filings, file taxes, search for a job, reserve a campsite at a national park, or obtain building permits. Their expectations have grown accordingly...desiring services that are a click away, not a queue.

- **Meeting political expectations.** The second reason for a transition to e-government is that such transitions have already occurred in almost all sectors of the business world. Businesses in virtually every sector are using the Internet to cut the cost of purchasing, to better manage supplier relationships, to streamline logistics and inventory, to plan production, to reach new customers more effectively, and to better manage customer relationships. These cost savings, increased consumer choice, and improved consumer convenience are driving growth in sales of physical goods and in the digital delivery of goods and services via the Internet. Our political leadership at all levels is cognizant of the shifts that are taking place, and is increasingly asking why government cannot obtain the same kinds of improvements. With the current proliferation of government investments in technology and the further move to Web-page consolidation and portal development, (e.g., the White House sponsored government-wide portal *FirstGov.gov*), it is imperative for ETA to engage stakeholders in the development of a shared government vision for AWN, and lay out prospective strategies to achieve that vision.
- **Realize efficiencies.** Experience shows that transforming manual and paper processes into digital online processes can decrease costs and save customers time. Savings realized from digitizing "red tape" laden administrative processes can then be converted into improved service to customers. When the Arizona vehicle registration program was put online, the average wait to register a car fell from 45 minutes to three minutes, and the cost to the state plummeted from \$6.60 per car to \$ 1.60.⁴ A recent study found that banks could lower their transaction costs to one cent per transaction by offering them over the Internet, compared with 27 cents using ATM, 54 cents using telephone, or \$1.07 at a full service bank. Most believe similar savings are possible for government. There are further efficiencies beyond just a shift away from paper. During a recent open comment period, the USDA received 270,000 public comments on a proposed rule by placing the rule online for comment instead of publishing it the Federal Register. This was the highest number of comments ever received by USDA on any proposed rule making, but still resulted in administrative savings of \$300,000.⁵ By one estimate, agencies can save up to 70% every time they re-engineer a service to move it online. Improved services to citizens can be achieved by providing seven day a week and twenty-four hour a day access to government services.
- **Internet Speed and Accessibility.** The use of the Internet is growing because of the ease by which individuals may now access it. There are two technology shifts driving this:

3 Birnbaum, Jeffrey. *Death to Bureaucrats, Good News for the Rest of Us*. Fortune Magazine, June, 2000.

4 Department of Commerce, *Falling Through The Net*, July, 1999.

higher bandwidth (increasing the speed that data flows to the user) and new access devices, which promise ubiquitous access. In the first instance, narrow band (Internet access over analog telephone lines) communication is being replaced by "broad band" technology (access over cable, fiber optics, or high-speed digital phone lines). The difference in speed of data transfer between narrow and broadband is remarkable. For example, it takes a narrow band system 46 minutes to download one 3.5-minute video clip. Over a broadband connection that same video can be downloaded in 8 seconds or less. This increase in transmission speed makes it possible to send and receive graphics, music, and videos with ease. The number of high-speed (broadband) Internet access subscribers in the U.S. has grown from 300,000 in 1998 to more than 5 million in January of 2001 and is expected to reach 42 million in 2005.

The second shift is caused from new technologies being developed to access the Web. Over the last two years numerous new devices have been introduced that facilitate access of the Internet without requiring a personal computer. These devices include:

- Wireless telephones that connect directly to the Internet and provide anywhere/anytime access. People can access the Internet from anywhere in the world through cell phones. Today 12% of cell phone users access the Internet.
- PDAs (personal digital assistants) such as the Palm Pilot and Microsoft's Pocket PC that are now able to connect directly to the Internet to up and down load information. And, they will soon function as telephones as well.
- Internet "appliances" that are either stand-alone or are connected to the television. These devices sell for considerably less than a computer (some for \$100), but deliver full Internet accessibility - and are easy to operate.

The combination of these new technologies with the low cost required to access the Internet and its easy-to-use browser interface is bringing more and more users to the Internet. Although the "digital divide" is a real barrier today, the emergence and distribution of newer and less costly technology is already closing the divide. When coupled with the huge investments that government is making in establishing public access points to the Internet, everyone in the nation, regardless of their economic or at-risk status, may soon have access though gaps in rural service will still exist. The "digital divide" problem shifts from being a problem of access to being a problem of having the skills to use the Internet to confront personal and professional challenges. The power of Internet-based systems solves the efficiency issues raised by the challenge of combining daunting amounts of data with the dispersal required to satisfy a large and growing number of users. In short, the Internet can, at the simplest level, be viewed as an enormously powerful device for quickly extending programs and initiatives to reach and serve more customers. Finally, an e-strategy for AWN can make the promise of the seven WIA "principles" a reality by providing access to customers on a 24/7 basis and from their homes or offices - independent of public facilities. When combined with the existing "in-person" service capabilities at OneStops and ES Centers, a very potent service network will emerge.

Strategic Approach

The five draft strategies that follow suggest a broad and comprehensive change in how America's Workforce Network conducts its business, makes its decisions, and carries out the interactions among national, state, and local partners. They are purposely stated broadly, so as

not to artificially restrict their scope. They are intended to articulate a coherent and reasonable approach to move AWN and its partners towards e-government and to contribute significantly to furthering AWN's mission of promoting more efficient and effective functioning of the U.S. labor market. If implemented, these strategies should place the America's Workforce Network solidly in the digital world. These strategies do not define a set of defined activities and there are no "end points" to this transformation. It is suggested that the transformation be perceived as the beginning of a journey that will likely not end in the short term.

However, this transition to the Internet will position America's Workforce Network to respond with agility and adaptability to emerging workforce issues and opportunities. It will place AWN on the path of continuous improvement by making sure its investments in new systems and technologies are always directed at meeting AWN's mission. It will also serve as a mechanism to break down traditional silos and vertical thinking by requiring collaboration and teamwork by both managers and staff across traditional organizational boundaries. Of particular interest to ETA is the assurance that federal offices work smoothly and cooperatively with states and Governor's offices so that together, local service delivery is seamless and well developed and supported.

While the strategies cited below apply to the transformation of the ETA and America's Workforce Network, they must be accomplished within the context of the changes occurring within the Department of Labor and across government generally. All the initiatives and projects that emanate from these strategies will be subject to emerging federal and state policy on issues such as privacy, confidentiality, security, and accessibility. For e-government to succeed, citizens must trust government to respect their privacy and to ensure, through appropriate levels of security, the confidentiality of personal information. We must also ensure that all citizens can access the information and services offered by e-government.

Strategy 1. Assist AWN partners to become digitally based and Internet-accessible

Partnerships with states, local governments, other federal departments and agencies, Job Corp Centers, non-profit organizations, labor unions, and employer organizations have been the hallmark of ETA's success in recent years. E-government will heighten the need for and value of such partnerships. For this transformation to succeed, all the America's Workforce Network partners must be fully engaged with the Internet in systems that are parallel and work with each other.

Several assumptions serve to clarify this strategy. First, it must be acknowledged that the AWN partners, across states and local agencies have made inconsistent progress in e-government transition. Some are very advanced while others have just started and therefore the role of ETA must be variable and designed to serve each partner as best fits their need. Second, while it is clear that a new reliance will be made on the Internet and its technologies, the AWN must insure that each client receives services in a manner that best meets his/her needs. We must be both "high tech and high touch." Third and finally, the success of this transformation must be measured by confirming that staff providing direct services feel more prepared and more competent to deliver improved services to individual customers.

The key for the success of Strategy One is for ETA to provide direct services and make strategic investments that assist, facilitate and promote opportunities for all partners to become Internet-enabled. A number of sub-strategies for the ETA emerged during the consultation strategy meetings with the regions, including:

- the role of "banker" in making strategic investments to assist partners;

- coordinator with state and local CIOs to assure that the vertical integration of the e-strategies of AWN are consistent with state strategies of horizontal integration;
- coordinator with national organizations and federal partners;
- acting as a clearinghouse and disseminator for ideas, issues, models, strategies and best practices as found across the AWN in states and local regions;
- serving as a monitor to record progress and successes - and to document shortfalls and shortcomings - of the AWN as it moves to this new environment;
- serving to coordinate and/or exchange information concerning e-government education and training activities among the AWN partners as needed to support the e-government transition;
- provider of research and coordinator for discussions among AWN partners to
 - define an e-government threshold of basic service at the local level;
 - define the nature and levels of technical assistance that will be required;

The complexity of the system or network, on the one hand, and the absolute requirement for user-friendly simplicity on the other requires very careful, thoughtful and integrated planning by the entire AWN. It suggests a breadth and depth of partnership that has heretofore not existed in inter-governmental circles. Given limited resources, the ETA may select from one or more of several investment strategies. It may

- invest in "early adopters" of e-government initiatives to assist in keeping them current and having them serve as models for others (e.g., states of Texas, Michigan or Utah);
- invest in states and local areas that are now ready to initiate e-government strategies and need resources to begin;
- invest in states and local areas that have no plans nor resources to begin;
- invest in strategies that address "access" issues across the nation for those with disabilities or to confront the realities of the "digital divide."
- or invest in a combination of several of the above.

If successful, an integrated federal, state, and local e-government service delivery system - based on open system architectures and standards-based information structures - will permit and support "real time" trend analysis and electronic "scouts" that will help ETA and its partners stay abreast of, and even anticipate, their customers' needs. Internally, electronic decision support systems will synthesize, integrate, and correlate data and assist decision-makers to access that data in usable and relevant knowledge-based chunks around the issues and topics of their interest.

Imagine these scenarios three years from now:

1) A small employer located in a rural area in America's Heartland has the opportunity to expand by becoming the subcontractor on a major international engineering contract if they can retrain their existing workers and find new workers with the right skills. The employer accesses the state's virtual One-Stop Office via the Internet, and places a job order using a job order writing tool that helps the employer identify and articulate the skills that are needed. The tool generates an automatic feed of the state order to the state job bank and AJB, and launches a search of the state's resume bank. Both employed and unemployed workers (including UI claimants and WTW enrollees), whose resumes match the

requirements of the job order, are notified by email of the job opportunities. The state's virtual One-Stop follows up with the employer to confirm any hires of UI claimants. Upon confirmation, the system ends the UI claim for those hired, and electronically sends the appropriate information to the state's New Hire Directory. Simultaneously, the career centers at local propriety schools, technical colleges, and community colleges are sent informed electronically about the job opportunity by the state system, and launch searches of their talent banks to identify students who will soon graduate with these skills, who are quickly referred to the employer. Depending upon the employer's need, the schools may also decide to recruit students for new courses and programs that target the skills the employer needs. The state virtual One-Stop then provides the employer with information, drawn from online repositories of available and approved courses, about distance learning courses that can address the upgrade in skills needed for existing employees. These employees are signed up for the courses, which they may complete at the employer's site or at home. Upon successful completion, they are provided portable credentials documenting the attainment of new skills that they can upload into their Career Management Account. Outcome data is available real time through the state data warehouse, which in turn is used as part of a new statistical process to generate short-term forecasts of local occupational demand.

2). A new urban inter-cultural community center is opening.... Because of the level of technology training offered at the local Job Corps center, students have offered to design a website to announce the opening and provide continually updated information and links to community center services. One group is working to design the page. In order to promote the center and highlight the cultures represented - Hispanic, Asian and Native American - students will incorporate digital animation to create 3-dimensional images for pop-out maps, with music, language, stories, pictures of food, costumes, etc. To do the research, this now becomes a project not only for the local Job Corps center, but also for centers from Hawaii, Alaska and Texas as a collaborative networked project. Students from all four centers participate in virtual field trips to the countries of origin, as well as museums with specialized collections and exhibits on the cultures represented. Experts from La Raza, Asian cultural organizations and tribal councils will be interviewed online and via email for culturally relevant input. Other students will be researching services offered by the community center, compiling a calendar of events, schedule of computer classes, ESL and other distance learning classes video-conferenced in from the Job Corps centers and community colleges, etc. Links to simultaneous translated email will also be developed to encourage direct communication with e-pen pals in other countries. Job Corps students will assist with the WAN infrastructure needed to link and communicate with the databases of the local One-Stop, thereby allowing direct access to One-Stop support services. Job Corps students will also partner to provide tech support and basic training to community center visitors allowing students to practice direct customer service skills and provide remote help desk experience. In this way they are gaining valuable hours of hands-on experience for industry-recognized certifications. Community leaders

will be interviewed and featured on the page; local mom-and-pop businesses will also be highlighted. As a special feature, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology will be incorporated to allow community residents access to directions, public transportation lines, etc. enabling them to attend the opening!

Strategy 2. Assist in developing governmental processes leading to "e-democracy"

Strategy Two suggests that better government is government that invites and facilitates citizen participation, interaction and increased public access. The single most critical assumption is that e-democracy initiatives must assure customer choice and deliver "citizen-centered" government. It is perhaps the most innovative, yet the most natural path that America's Workforce Network can follow.

In adopting this strategy, AWN can experiment in the use of "push technology"-- e-mail responses, live broadcasts of departmental events, automated electronic mailing lists to provide requested information and updates, and tailored information for individuals as a means to open doors and invite citizens to learn what we are doing and to comment on it. The AWN can also use e-government as a means to "democratize" data. Importantly, the technology can directly confront the difficulties of access for the disabled and address the issues generally included under the heading of "digital divide." Encompassed as part of the AWN's mission is the idea of providing citizens with the information they need to make more informed decisions regarding their work life.

AWN investments in America's Career Kit, including America's Job Bank, America's Learning eXchange, and America's Career InfoNet, are strong starts in e-democracy. Other positive "starts" in e-democracy are found in the National Guard's investment in training and programming being made available to local citizens and programs sponsored by the US Department of Commerce. Again, ETA must consider making strategic investments to states and local areas as "seed capital" to support innovations and demonstrations across the country. Central questions focus on how to integrate national investments with state and local investments so that real and positive differences are felt by customers in the public workforce development system.

Perhaps most significant is the fact that the Internet could get people, who now feel alienated from government, more involved in it. It has the potential to strengthen our democracy and to make government more open, more efficient, and user-friendlier.

Imagine this scenario three years from now:

In preparation for the re-authorization of the Workforce Investment Act, the Secretary holds a series of Internet-based town meetings inviting citizens to listen and comment on WIA. The agenda and issues for the town hall meetings have been developed in advance through a collaborative effort between state, local and federal partners in AWN using web-based interactive tools. The entire town hall proceedings are recorded, transcribed using voice recognition software, and posted on the DOL home page stimulating further comment and input from the public. Interactive public dialogues, using threaded discussions, are initiated over the web between senior DOL officials, state and local officials, and congressional staff. Individual citizens can ask questions, request supporting data and information, or

just watch the dialogue as it occurs. Citizens who desire to learn more on a specific issue log on to ETA's web page and access research files, grantee performance reports, legislative drafts, or other related information.

Strategy 3. Collaboratively develop standards that enhance the quality, efficiency, security and effectiveness of America's Workforce Network

Strategy Three addresses a most crucial e-government issue. It suggests that the AWN and its partners must cooperate to accomplish the following difficult tasks:

- begin the process of identifying and adopting **standards**;
- plan and deliver appropriate **technology assistance** to all AWN partners;
- invest in service delivery and IT systems which citizens feel are both **secure and private**;
- address the need for practical yet secure processes for **sharing data** within AWN.

Standards: The AWN must initiate processes for identifying and adopting open standards that will support data exchange across the IT systems of all the partners. This data exchange needs to take place not only across the state and local partners of AWN but across the WIA partner agencies such as the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. Federal technical standards and use of open architectures are essential components in e-government that assure the effective integration and interoperability of the cross-functional, cross-organization systems and services inherent in Workforce Investment System. However, beyond technical integration are the user issues of: *consistency, ease of use, ability to understand, and the need for common language and definitions* Areas where standards may be investigated include:

- program-level technology
- common data exchange elements
- Web site functionality and usability
- common intake and case management procedures
- "harmonizing" program terms and definitions among federal programs
- assurance of accessibility for the disabled and for those on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The ETA's role in this first sub-strategy may be to act as a clearinghouse and coordinator of information exchange. It may also convene committees and sponsor research programs that focus on specific standard's questions. A single assumption underpins all ETA efforts: standards must emerge from a collaborative and coordinated process where all participants are fully involved.

Technology Assistance: ETA in coordination with its partners must plan and deliver adequate technology assistance to all AWN partners. The role of technology assistance may include building on existing capabilities of existing organizations and:

- establishing a basic threshold of technology readiness;
- sponsoring of research;
- providing direct consultation and assistance as appropriate to state and local professionals;
- acting as a convener of committees and task groups;
- a clearinghouse for information, ideas, issues, models, best practices, etc.
- a nexus for establishing metrics for measuring progress and success;
- a source of information upon which the AWN could make investments technology innovations;

Security and Privacy: The third task within this strategy is to plan for AWN Information Technology systems which citizens feel are both secure and private. Perhaps no other task is more critical than building and promoting information systems that citizens believe are useful and secure and private. Without this achievement nothing we accomplish will be used and it will be difficult to secure funding to maintain these strategies. The ETA/AWN strategy may include assisting in the setting of minimum levels of expectations for customer privacy and for the secure transmission of personal information.

Data Sharing: During the regional consultation meetings there was general agreement that data sharing - among states, among local areas, between states and local areas, between states and national offices - was an inherently good thing but fraught with dangers and concerns. The dangers were largely found in privacy/security issues and the concerns focused on the difficulty of data exchange in environments that had no consistent common data elements/definitions/files, etc. The benefits were easily identified as data sharing can lead to better insights into program management, improved accuracy in assessments and a variety of efficiency gains. The ETA role in this strategy may include:

- the sponsoring of research;
- acting as a convener of committees and task groups;
- coordinating the identification of important standards to facilitate data sharing such as XML standards for Internet, Web-based data transfer systems;
- a clearinghouse for information, ideas, issues, models, best practices, etc.
- a nexus for establishing metrics for measuring progress and success;
- a source of information upon which the AWN could make investments in data sharing innovations.

Imagine this scenario three years from now:

During a Congressional debate on the new World-wide Electronic Trade Act questions arise on the number of individuals enrolled in technology training that would lead to certain certifications in certain geographic areas. The ETA electronically mines the appropriate state data warehouses using agreed upon XML interfaces, and provides tailored data to inform the debate... in a matter of minutes! It uses wireless technology and search-and-assemble smart software that knows, from previous questions, how and where to get the data. Not only are precise enrollment figures for specific programs made available, but by selectively deploying pre-configured analytical software worker training trend analysis and workforce shortages are delivered as well.

Strategy 4. Invest in e-learning systems that support the development of public workforce development professionals

ETA continues to bear the major responsibility for heading the establishment and maintenance of the state and local workforce development systems of America's Workforce Network. In furtherance of this responsibility, ETA through its e-government effort, can help build communities of world-class workforce development professionals around specialized tools and standardized best practices. Again however, the critical assumption for such an initiative is that, whatever systems are established they must lead to improved service to customers. In the end, staff must feel competent to serve customers and have the tools available to actually improve service. AWN partners also emphasized that they should feel that they have choices in what is delivered to their staffs - that some may choose to serve customers in more traditional ways.

ETA can support the establishment of a technology-based electronic-learning system organized around a virtual "university" construct where

- high quality training is delivered online to address the skill needs of ETA's partners and their staff;
- where a certification of competency is the expected outcome of such training;
- where credentialing is effective and valid;
- where the collective knowledge of the workforce system is stored, managed and made accessible to all workforce development professionals;
- where information is gathered and new knowledge created;
- where state and local agencies may exchange training modules and models;
- and where distance learning standards can be tested and disseminated
- where technical assistance is available.

This "University" is used in its broadest context and will use available and emerging technologies to deliver information and training on a 24/7 basis. An electronic learning/distance-education system, in the form of a virtual university, supported by the AWN and integrated into its services, will create, manage, and deliver education and training from repositories of training modules and reusable training objects - a place for the sharing of various models, ideas and products among partners. These will be built in accordance with emerging e-learning standards using advanced technology and offered via both synchronous and asynchronous delivery systems. Supporting a distance learning capability is a good investment for ETA on behalf of AWN. A survey of working adults conducted by Opinion Research Corporation revealed that 54% believed that college courses offered via the Internet are the future of higher education. They also like the flexibility and timesaving afforded by learning online. Distance learning also offers significant economies of scale as a means of developing and delivering of new learning content.

The investment strategy for establishing a learning capability should reflect:

- a review of existing systems and models to identify those that will offer the most to the AWN;
- a thorough investigation of state and local education/training systems for preparing workforce professionals to determine gaps;
- several pilot initiatives to demonstrate strengths/weaknesses of models
- a focus on measurable and successful learning outcomes;
- the desire to customize e-learning products to fit state branding and program specifications;
- the ability to deliver e-learning models, products and services at differing levels of technical sophistication to fit the capacities and progress of state systems;
- assessment and use of existing systems and curriculum.

Imagine this scenario three years from now:

1). Diane is a training specialist working in a large metropolitan area; Joe is an Unemployment Specialist assigned to the same area. They both work under standardized AWN functional Position Descriptions which include competency models addressing the unique requirements for their specialties. Both work out of a One-Stop Career Center located in the suburbs of that metropolitan area. As knowledge workers, both have a wealth of information about their respective

product lines. To facilitate the needs of customers being served by the One-Stop, both have taken several cross-training courses offered by AWN Virtual University that provided them with the general knowledge of the others' respective product lines. Their respective jobs may require travel outside of the office. On travel days, it may be necessary for Diane or Joe to cover for each other to ensure proper customer service. The AWN course criteria was set up in a Web accessible environment that allowed them to take and complete the course at their own pace and on their own time. Upon successful completion of the course, each received electronic certification that they had mastered one of the skills in the AWN's competency model for One-Stop front line staff. In addition to better serving their customers, since the job hierarchy of the One-Stop Center is centered around these competencies, Diane and Joe can help advance their own careers by taking these courses.

Strategy 5. ETA will become digitally based and Internet-accessible

Under this strategy, ETA will move to become a fully integrated, digitally-based, Internet-accessible organization structured and designed to integrate with and serve its partners and its customers - to be a full and cooperative partner of the AWN. Importantly, ETA acknowledges that its principal customers are states, local service delivery areas, national non-profit grantees, and the Job Corp operators among others. It further acknowledges that it must change itself as it assists the AWN to do the same. ETA will streamline its internal functions as well. ETA will need to consider how to best manage its knowledge and information holdings to best serve the AWN. All of its major business functions will be reviewed and re-engineered to digital processes with special and early focus on:

- an on-line grant management process in coordination with other agencies;
- Internet-based financial and performance reporting;
- technical models of governance;
- the elimination of program and audit barriers;
- on-line reporting policies, guidance, and feedback systems;
- a virtual one-stop shop for all ETA services.

Imagine this scene three years from now:

1)The BAT Apprenticeship Agreement is posted on the Web Page and can be instantly downloaded by program sponsors. As ACME Manufacturing (a program sponsor) selects new apprentices, they pull down the agreement which already has their program data on the form, complete the blocks, electronically sign the agreement, and send it to the local Apprenticeship Training Representative (ATR) for verification and registration. Once ATR sees a flag indicating there are agreements to register, they pull up the agreement, verify and register. After registration, ATR electronically signs the agreement and sends it back to ACME Manufacturing via the Internet. ATR clicks on a button and the data recorded on the agreement would be transferred into the AIMS database. The new apprentices document attainment of the education and training components in their Career Management Account. Since this information has already been validated by a third party, it can be used to document completion of these apprenticeship requirements,

right over the Internet, to the appropriate granting authority when it is time for the apprentice to receive journeyman status.

2) A state workforce development council staff member has been electronically notified of a newly released ETA SGA. He accesses all the grant information and the required forms (in electronic format) from the DOLETA Web site and begins the grant writing/development process. Help is available through a variety of vehicles including e-mail, Web site help sources and telephonically. The draft grant is actually written and stored within secure ETA servers and is only available to the writer from where ever he works and forms are "smart" within built-in help. The proposal is electronically submitted and electronically dispersed to grant reader/judges. As a winner, the state officials are electronically notified and "notices of obligation" are provided - again electronically. As the grant activities occur, processes managed through ETA's EIMS System are available for electronic reporting. Report forms are in the "smart" format and provide editing, checking and subtle guidance to assure correct submissions.

3) *An ETA Federal Representative is driving to a State to make a presentation to the State Workforce Board on the overall status of the workforce system in the state. The person prepared by calling from the Customer Relations Management (CRM) system a summary of all contacts and transactions over the past six months between all ETA program staff and State personnel relative to all programs. The regional management information system was tapped to review the status of program implementation in the State and to determine whether there were any outstanding policy issues. Additionally, easy to read and understand charts and graphs showing the performance of all programs in the state were prepared in Powerpoint for use in the presentation. Parts of the presentation were obtained from the depository of prior speeches and presentations maintained on ETA's intranet page. During the drive, a cell phone call from the office informs the federal representative that information has been received that a story will break the next day concerning the performance of the office which will be detrimental and the state workforce development office has requested assistance. The government official hangs up and immediately connects to the regional office web site using a hand held computer to design and submit an info bot search. Upon arriving at the destination an hour or so later the official again contacts the regional office web site and retrieves official, up-to-date information on program performance for the local one-stop in the form of graphs and charts together with anecdotal success stories. Also in the download are comparisons with other similar one-stops around the country and a list of best practices for those areas where improvement is desirable, with pertinent regulation citations, directives, and policy issuances, as appropriate. Among the information provided from the search is biographical data on the members of the local workforce board and on the one-stop manager. Armed with this information the federal representative is able to have a focused discussion with the one-stop manager and the state workforce development administrative office and to assist in developing a pro-active responses to inquiries which will arise from*

the forthcoming newspaper story.

Next Steps

The Employment and Training Administration acknowledges that the immense scale of this undertaking will require ETA to retool many of its business practices and its partner and interoffice relationships. Success will depend as much on collaboration among people, offices and partners as it will on resources. The key to success depends on the development of a shared vision, and strategy for implementing that vision among ETA and all of its state and local partners and stakeholders in AWN.

Towards that end, ETA has begun consultative process designed to engage our partners and stakeholders fully in the discussion, development and implementation of a successful e-government strategies for America's Workforce Network. Four workgroups composed of ETA staff, state and local partners are now working to create investment strategies and implementation plans for strategies one through four. Strategy five is being addressed by ETA's EIMS Steering Committee. Funds will be available after July 1, 2001 to begin to support implementation plans, and an investment strategy will be developed for FY 2003 - 2005.

The strategies contained in this document are illustrative and designed to provide a constructive starting point for a discussion that leads to a common vision that will provide the direction needed for the system to navigate these as yet uncharted waters with the mutual goal of delivering the best possible service to the American people.